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**William Shakespeare**

**King Lear.**

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1606

## THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

### Dramatis Personae

Lear, King of Britain.  
King of France.  
Duke of Burgundy.  
Duke of Cornwall.  
Duke of Albany.  
Earl of Kent.  
Earl of Gloucester.  
Edgar, son of Gloucester.  
Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester.  
Curan, a courtier.  
An Old Man, tenant to Gloucester.  
A Doctor.  
Lear's Fool.  
Oswald, steward to Goneril.  
A Captain under Edmund's command.  
Gentlemen.  
A Herald.

Servants to Cornwall.  
Goneril, daughter to Lear.  
Regan, daughter to Lear.  
Cordelia, daughter to Lear.  
Knights attending on Lear, Officers, Messengers,  
Soldiers,  
Attendants.

Scene: --Britain.

ACT I. Scene I.

[King Lear's Palace.]

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund. [Kent and Gloucester converse.]

Edmund stands back.]

Kent. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glou. It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most, for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord?

Glou. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often

blush'd to acknowledge him that now I am braz'd to't.

Kent. I cannot conceive you.

Glou. Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew

round-womb'd, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she

had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

Kent. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so

proper.

Glou. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than

this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave came

something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was

his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the

whoreson must be acknowledged.--Do you know this noble gentleman,

Edmund?

Edm. [comes forward] No, my lord.

Glou. My Lord of Kent. Remember him hereafter as my  
honourable  
friend.

Edm. My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm. Sir, I shall study deserving.

Glou. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall  
again.

Sound a  
sennet.

The King is coming.

Enter one bearing a coronet; then Lear; then the  
Dukes of  
Albany and Cornwall; next, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia,  
with  
Followers.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy,  
Gloucester.

Glou. I shall, my liege.

Exeunt [Gloucester and  
Edmund].

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.

Give me the map there. Know we have divided  
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent  
To shake all cares and business from our age,  
Conferring them on younger strengths while we  
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,  
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
We have this hour a constant will to publish  
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
May be prevented now. The princes, France and  
Burgundy,

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters  
(Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
Interest of territory, cares of state),  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,  
Our eldest-born, speak first.

Gon. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the  
matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;  
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;  
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty,

honour;

As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;  
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable.  
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Cor. [aside] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

Lear. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,  
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue  
Be this perpetual. -What says our second daughter,  
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Reg. Sir, I am made  
Of the selfsame metal that my sister is,  
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love;  
Only she comes too short, that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear Highness' love.

Cor. [aside] Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's  
More richer than my tongue.

Lear. To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure  
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. --Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interest; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing can come of nothing. Speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty  
According to my bond; no more nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,  
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

Cor. Good my lord,  
You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me; I  
Return those duties back as are right fit,  
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.  
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,

That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry  
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.  
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,  
To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this?

Cor. Ay, good my lord.

Lear. So young, and so untender?

Cor. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so! thy truth then be thy dower!

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
The mysteries of Hecate and the night;  
By all the operation of the orbs  
From whom we do exist and cease to be;  
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
Propinquity and property of blood,  
And as a stranger to my heart and me  
Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,  
Or he that makes his generation messes  
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom  
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,  
As thou my sometime daughter.

Kent. Good my liege-

Lear. Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.  
I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest  
On her kind nursery.-Hence and avoid my sight!-  
So be my grave my peace as here I give  
Her father's heart from her! Call France! Who stirs?  
Call Burgundy! Cornwall and Albany,  
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third;  
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.  
I do invest you jointly in my power,  
Preeminence, and all the large effects  
That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,  
With reservation of an hundred knights,  
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode  
Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain  
The name, and all th' additions to a king. The sway,  
Revenue, execution of the rest,  
Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,  
This coronet part betwixt you.

Kent. Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,  
Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,  
As my great patron thought on in my prayers-

Lear. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

Kent. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade

The region of my heart! Be Kent unmannerly  
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?  
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak  
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's  
bound

When majesty falls to folly. Reverse thy doom;  
And in thy best consideration check  
This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,  
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
Reverbs no hollowness.

Lear. Kent, on thy life, no more!

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn  
To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,  
Thy safety being the motive.

Lear. Out of my sight!

Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still remain  
The true blank of thine eye.

Lear. Now by Apollo-

Kent. Now by Apollo, King,  
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear. O vassal! miscreant!

[Lays his hand on his  
sword.]

Alb., Corn. Dear sir, forbear!

Kent. Do!

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,  
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear. Hear me, recreant!

On thine allegiance, hear me!  
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow-  
Which we durst never yet-and with strain'd pride  
To come between our sentence and our power,-  
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,-  
Our potency made good, take thy reward.  
Five days we do allot thee for provision  
To shield thee from diseases of the world,  
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back  
Upon our kingdom. If, on the tenth day following,  
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,  
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,  
This shall not be revok'd.

Kent. Fare thee well, King. Since thus thou wilt appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

[To Cordelia] The gods to their dear shelter take

thee, maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!  
[To Regan and Goneril] And your large speeches may  
your deeds  
approve,  
That good effects may spring from words of love.  
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new.

Exit.

Flourish. Enter Gloucester, with France and Burgundy;  
Attendants.

Glou. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear. My Lord of Burgundy,

We first address toward you, who with this king  
Hath rivall'd for our daughter. What in the least  
Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love?

Bur. Most royal Majesty,

I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd,  
Nor will you tender less.

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,

When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;  
But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands.  
If aught within that little seeming substance,  
Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,  
And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace,  
She's there, and she is yours.

Bur. I know no answer.

Lear. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,  
Dow'r'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,  
Take her, or leave her?

Bur. Pardon me, royal sir.

Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the pow'r that made  
me,

I tell you all her wealth. [To France] For you,  
great King,

I would not from your love make such a stray  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
T' avert your liking a more worthier way  
Than on a wretch whom nature is asham'd  
Almost t' acknowledge hers.

France. This is most strange,

That she that even but now was your best object,  
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time

Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle  
So many folds of favour. Sure her offence  
Must be of such unnatural degree  
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection  
Fall'n into taint; which to believe of her  
Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
Should never plant in me.

Cor. I yet beseech your Majesty,  
If for I want that glib and oily art  
To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend,  
I'll do't before I speak-that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murther, or foulness,  
No unchaste action or dishonoured step,  
That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favour;  
But even for want of that for which I am richer-  
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou

Hadst not been born than not t' have pleas'd me  
better.

France. Is it but this-a tardiness in nature  
Which often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do? My Lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stands  
Aloof from th' entire point. Will you have her?  
She is herself a dowry.

Bur. Royal Lear,

Give but that portion which yourself propos'd,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear. Nothing! I have sworn; I am firm.

Bur. I am sorry then you have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.

Cor. Peace be with Burgundy!

Since that respects of fortune are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.

France. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being  
poor;

Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.  
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st  
neglect  
My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.  
Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,



Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.  
Not all the dukes in wat'rish Burgundy  
Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind.  
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.  
Lear. Thou hast her, France; let her be thine; for we  
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
That face of hers again. Therefore be gone  
Without our grace, our love, our benison.  
Come, noble Burgundy.

Flourish. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, [Cornwall,  
Albany,

Gloucester, and  
Attendants].

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor. The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes  
Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are;  
And, like a sister, am most loath to call  
Your faults as they are nam'd. Use well our father.  
To your professed bosoms I commit him;  
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,  
I would prefer him to a better place!  
So farewell to you both.

Gon. Prescribe not us our duties.

Reg. Let your study  
Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you  
At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,  
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

Cor. Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides.  
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.  
Well may you prosper!

France. Come, my fair Cordelia.

Exeunt France and  
Cordelia.

Gon. Sister, it is not little I have to say of what  
most nearly  
appertains to us both. I think our father will hence  
to-night.

Reg. That's most certain, and with you; next month with  
us.

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is. The  
observation we  
have made of it hath not been little. He always  
lov'd our  
sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now  
cast her  
off appears too grossly.

Reg. 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever  
but slenderly

known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but  
rash; then

must we look to receive from his age, not alone the  
imperfections of long-ingraffed condition, but  
therewithal

the unruly waywardnes that infirm and choleric years  
bring with  
them.

Reg. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from  
him as this

of Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking  
between France and

him. Pray you let's hit together. If our father  
carry authority

with such dispositions as he bears, this last  
surrender of his

will but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think on't.

Gon. We must do something, and i' th' heat.

Exeunt.

## Scene II.

The Earl of Gloucester's Castle.

Enter [Edmund the] Bastard solus, [with a letter].

Edm. Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law

My services are bound. Wherefore should I

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit

The curiosity of nations to deprive me,

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines

Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?

When my dimensions are as well compact,

My mind as generous, and my shape as true,

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us

With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?

Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take

More composition and fierce quality

Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,

Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops

Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,

Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.

Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund

As to th' legitimate. Fine word-'legitimate'!

Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,

And my invention thrive, Edmund the base

Shall top th' legitimate. I grow; I prosper.

Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter Gloucester.

Glou. Kent banish'd thus? and France in choler parted?

And the King gone to-night? subscrib'd his pow'r?

Confin'd to exhibition? All this done

Upon the gad? Edmund, how now? What news?

Edm. So please your lordship, none.

[Puts up the

letter.]

Glou. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

Edm. I know no news, my lord.

Glou. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

Glou. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it  
into your

pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to  
hide

itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall  
not need

spectacles.

Edm. I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from  
my brother

that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I  
have

perus'd, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

Glou. Give me the letter, sir.

Edm. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The  
contents, as

in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glou. Let's see, let's see!

Edm. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote  
this but as

an essay or taste of my virtue.

Glou. (reads) 'This policy and reverence of age makes  
the world

bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes  
from us

till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find  
an idle

and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny,  
who sways,

not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd. Come to  
me, that

of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep  
till I

wak'd him, you should enjoy half his revenue for

ever, and live  
the beloved of your brother,

'EDGAR.'

Hum! Conspiracy? 'Sleep till I wak'd him, you should  
enjoy half

his revenue.' My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write  
this? a heart

and brain to breed it in? When came this to you? Who  
brought it?

Edm. It was not brought me, my lord: there's the  
cunning of it. I

found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

Glou. You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it  
were his;

but in respect of that, I would fain think it were  
not.

Glou. It is his.

Edm. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is  
not in the

contents.

Glou. Hath he never before sounded you in this business?

Edm. Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain  
it to be fit

that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining,  
the father

should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his  
revenue.

Glou. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the  
letter! Abhorred

villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse  
than

brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him. I'll apprehend him.  
Abominable

villain! Where is he?

Edm. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please  
you to suspend

your indignation against my brother till you can  
derive from him

better testimony of his intent, you should run a  
certain course;

where, if you violently proceed against him,  
mistaking his

purpose, it would make a great gap in your own  
honour and shake

in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn  
down my life

for him that he hath writ this to feel my affection  
to your

honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

Glou. Think you so?

Edm. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you  
where you shall

hear us confer of this and by an auricular assurance  
have your

satisfaction, and that without any further delay  
than this very  
evening.

Glou. He cannot be such a monster.

Edm. Nor is not, sure.

Glou. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely  
loves him.

Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into  
him, I pray

you; frame the business after your own wisdom. I  
would unstate  
myself to be in a due resolution.

Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently; convey the  
business as I

shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

Glou. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend  
no good to

us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus  
and thus, yet

nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects.  
Love cools,

friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities,  
mutinies; in

countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the  
bond crack'd

'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes  
under the

prediction; there's son against father: the King  
falls from bias

of nature; there's father against child. We have  
seen the best

of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery,  
and all

ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our  
graves. Find out

this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do  
it

carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent  
banish'd! his

offence, honesty! 'Tis  
strange. Exit.

Edm. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that,  
when we are

sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own  
behaviour, we make

guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the  
stars; as if

we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly  
compulsion;

knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical pre-  
dominance;

drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforc'd  
obedience of

planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by  
a divine

thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master  
man, to lay

his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My  
father

compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail,  
and my

nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I  
am rough and

lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the  
maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my  
bastardizing.

Edgar-

Enter Edgar.

and pat! he comes, like the catastrophe of the old  
comedy. My

cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom  
o' Bedlam.

O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! Fa,  
sol, la, mi.

Edg. How now, brother Edmund? What serious  
contemplation are you  
in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read  
this other day,

what should follow these eclipses.

Edg. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed  
unhappily: as

of unnaturalness between the child and the parent;  
death,

dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions

in state,  
    menaces and maledictions against king and nobles;  
needless  
    diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of  
cohorts,  
    nuptial breaches, and I know not what.  
Edg. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?  
Edm. Come, come! When saw you my father last?  
Edg. The night gone by.  
Edm. Spake you with him?  
Edg. Ay, two hours together.  
Edm. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure  
in him by  
    word or countenance  
Edg. None at all.  
Edm. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended  
him; and at my  
    entreaty forbear his presence until some little time  
hath  
    qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this  
instant so  
    rageth in him that with the mischief of your person  
it would  
    scarcely allay.  
Edg. Some Villain hath done me wrong.  
Edm. That's my fear. I pray you have a continent  
forbearance till  
    the speed of his rage goes slower; and, as I say,  
retire with me  
    to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to  
hear my  
    lord speak. Pray ye, go! There's my key. If you do  
stir abroad,  
    go arm'd.  
Edg. Arm'd, brother?  
Edm. Brother, I advise you to the best. Go arm'd. I am  
no honest man  
    if there be any good meaning toward you. I have told  
you what I  
    have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the  
image and  
    horror of it. Pray you, away!  
Edg. Shall I hear from you anon?  
Edm. I do serve you in this business.

Exit

Edgar.

    A credulous father! and a brother noble,

Whose nature is so far from doing harms  
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty  
My practices ride easy! I see the business.  
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;  
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

Exit.

Scene III.

The Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Goneril and [her] Steward [Oswald].

Gon. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of  
his fool?

Osw. Ay, madam.

Gon. By day and night, he wrongs me! Every hour  
He flashes into one gross crime or other  
That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.  
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us  
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,  
I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.  
If you come slack of former services,  
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

[Horns

within.]

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,  
You and your fellows. I'd have it come to question.  
If he distaste it, let him to our sister,  
Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,  
Not to be overrul'd. Idle old man,  
That still would manage those authorities  
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again, and must be us'd  
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd.  
Remember what I have said.

Osw. Very well, madam.

Gon. And let his knights have colder looks among you.  
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.  
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister  
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

Exeunt.

Scene IV.

The Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Kent, [disguised].



Kent. If but as well I other accents borrow,  
That can my speech defuse, my good intent  
May carry through itself to that full issue  
For which I raz'd my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,  
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,  
Shall find thee full of labours.

Horns within. Enter Lear, [Knights,] and Attendants.

Lear. Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it  
ready. [Exit

an Attendant.] How now? What art thou?

Kent. A man, sir.

Lear. What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

Kent. I do profess to be no less than I seem, to serve  
him truly

that will put me in trust, to love him that is  
honest, to

converse with him that is wise and says little, to  
fear

judgment, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat  
no fish.

Lear. What art thou?

Kent. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the  
King.

Lear. If thou best as poor for a subject as he's for a  
king, thou

art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent. Service.

Lear. Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance  
which I would

fain call master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What services canst thou do?

Kent. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a  
curious tale in

telling it and deliver a plain message bluntly. That  
which

ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the  
best of me

is diligence.

Lear. How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing,  
nor so old to

dote on her for anything. I have years on my back  
forty-eight.

Lear. Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no  
worse after

dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho,  
dinner!

Where's my knave? my fool? Go you and call my fool  
hither.

[Exit an  
attendant.]

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

Osw. So please  
you-

Exit.

Lear. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll  
back.

[Exit a Knight.] Where's my fool, ho? I think the  
world's  
asleep.

[Enter Knight]

How now? Where's that mongrel?

Knight. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear. Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd  
him

Knight. Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he  
would not.

Lear. He would not?

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to  
my judgment

your Highness is not entertain'd with that  
ceremonious affection

as you were wont. There's a great abatement of  
kindness appears

as well in the general dependants as in the Duke  
himself also

and your daughter.

Lear. Ha! say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be  
mistaken; for

my duty cannot be silent when I think your Highness

wrong'd.

Lear. Thou but rememb'rest me of mine own conception. I have

perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather

blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence

and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into't. But

where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

Knight. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool

hath much pined away.

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you and tell my

daughter I would speak with her. [Exit Knight.] Go you, call

hither my fool.

[Exit an

Attendant.]

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

O, you, sir, you! Come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?

Osw. My lady's father.

Lear. 'My lady's father'? My lord's knave! You whoreson dog! you

slave! you cur!

Osw. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

Lear. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[Strikes

him.]

Osw. I'll not be stricken, my lord.

Kent. Nor tripp'd neither, you base football player?

[Trips up his

heels.

Lear. I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.

Kent. Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. Away,

away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry; but

away! Go to! Have you wisdom? So.

[Pushes

him out.]

Lear. Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's

earnest of thy  
service.  
money.]

[Gives

Enter Fool.

Fool. Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb.  
[Offers Kent  
his cap.]

Lear. How now, my pretty knave? How dost thou?

Fool. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

Kent. Why, fool?

Fool. Why? For taking one's part that's out of favour.  
Nay, an thou

canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold  
shortly.

There, take my coxcomb! Why, this fellow hath  
banish'd two son's

daughters, and did the third a blessing against his  
will. If

thou follow him, thou must needs wear my cox-comb.-  
How now,

nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

Lear. Why, my boy?

Fool. If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my  
coxcombs myself.

There's mine! beg another of thy daughters.

Lear. Take heed, sirrah-the whip.

Fool. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd  
out, when

Lady the brach may stand by th' fire and stink.

Lear. A pestilent gall to me!

Fool. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear. Do.

Fool. Mark it, nuncle.

Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,  
Lend less than thou owest,  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,  
Set less than thou throwest;  
Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
And keep in-a-door,  
And thou shalt have more  
Than two tens to a score.

Kent. This is nothing, fool.

Fool. Then 'tis like the breath of an unfeed lawyer-you

gave me

nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing,  
nuncle?

Lear. Why, no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing.

Fool. [to Kent] Prithee tell him, so much the rent of  
his land

comes to. He will not believe a fool.

Lear. A bitter fool!

Fool. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a  
bitter

fool and a sweet fool?

Lear. No, lad; teach me.

Fool. That lord that counselled thee

To give away thy land,  
Come place him here by me-  
Do thou for him stand.

The sweet and bitter fool

Will presently appear;

The one in motley here,

The other found out there.

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that  
thou wast

born with.

Kent. This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool. No, faith; lords and great men will not let me.  
If I had a

monopoly out, they would have part on't. And ladies  
too, they

will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll  
be

snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give  
thee two

crowns.

Lear. What two crowns shall they be?

Fool. Why, after I have cut the egg i' th' middle and  
eat up the

meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest  
thy crown i'

th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st  
thine ass on

thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy  
bald crown

when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak  
like myself in

this, let him be whipp'd that first finds it so.

[Sings]       Fools had Deer less grace in a year,  
                  For wise men are grown foppish;  
                  They know not how their wits to wear,  
                  Their manners are so apish.

Lear. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

Fool. I have us'd it, nuncle, ever since thou mad'st  
thy daughters  
      thy mother; for when thou gav'st them the rod, and  
put'st down  
      thine own breeches,

[Sings]       Then they for sudden joy did weep,  
                  And I for sorrow sung,  
                  That such a king should play bo-peep  
                  And go the fools among.

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach  
thy fool to  
      lie. I would fain learn to lie.

Lear. An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipp'd.

Fool. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are.  
They'll have me  
      whipp'd for speaking true; thou'lt have me whipp'd  
for lying;  
      and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace. I  
had rather be  
      any kind o' thing than a fool! And yet I would not  
be thee,  
      nuncle. Thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and  
left nothing  
      i' th' middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

Enter Goneril.

Lear. How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet on?  
Methinks you

      are too much o' late i' th' frown.

Fool. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need  
to care for

      her frowning. Now thou art an O without a figure. I  
am better

      than thou art now: I am a fool, thou art nothing.

[To Goneril] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue.  
So your face  
      bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum!

He that keeps nor crust nor crum,  
Weary of all, shall want some.-

[Points at Lear] That's a sheal'd peascod.  
Gon. Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd fool,  
But other of your insolent retinue  
Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth  
In rank and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,  
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,  
To have found a safe redress, but now grow fearful,  
By what yourself, too, late have spoke and done,  
That you protect this course, and put it on  
By your allowance; which if you should, the fault  
Would not scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,  
Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,  
Might in their working do you that offence  
Which else were shame, that then necessity  
Must call discreet proceeding.  
Fool. For you know, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long  
That it had it head bit off by it young.

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.  
Lear. Are you our daughter?

Gon. Come, sir,  
I would you would make use of that good wisdom  
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away  
These dispositions that of late transform you  
From what you rightly are.

Fool. May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?  
Whoop, Jug, I love thee!

Lear. Doth any here know me? This is not Lear.  
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
Are lethargied-Ha! waking? 'Tis not so!  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool. Lear's shadow.

Lear. I would learn that; for, by the marks of  
sovereignty,  
Knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded  
I had daughters.

Fool. Which they will make an obedient father.

Lear. Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Gon. This admiration, sir, is much o' th' savour  
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you  
To understand my purposes aright.

As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust  
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak  
For instant remedy. Be then desir'd  
By her that else will take the thing she begs  
A little to disquantity your train,  
And the remainder that shall still depend  
To be such men as may besort your age,  
Which know themselves, and you.

Lear. Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses! Call my train together!  
Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee;  
Yet have I left a daughter.

Gon. You strike my people, and your disorder'd rabble  
Make servants of their betters.

Enter Albany.

Lear. Woe that too late repents!-O, sir, are you come?  
Is it your will? Speak, sir!-Prepare my horses.  
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster!

Alb. Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. [to Goneril] Detested kite, thou liest!  
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
That all particulars of duty know  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worships of their name.-O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature  
From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love  
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in [Strikes  
his head.]

And thy dear judgment out! Go, go, my people.

Alb. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant  
Of what hath mov'd you.

Lear. It may be so, my lord.

Hear, Nature, hear! dear goddess, hear!  
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
To make this creature fruitful.  
Into her womb convey sterility;



Dry up in her the organs of increase;  
And from her derogate body never spring  
A babe to honour her! If she must teem,  
Create her child of spleen, that it may live  
And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her.  
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,  
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,  
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child! Away,

away! Exit.

Alb. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

Gon. Never afflict yourself to know the cause;  
But let his disposition have that scope  
That dotage gives it.

Enter Lear.

Lear. What, fifty of my followers at a clap?  
Within a fortnight?

Alb. What's the matter, sir?

Lear. I'll tell thee. [To Goneril] Life and death! I am  
asham'd

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;  
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,  
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon  
thee!

Th' untented woundings of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense about thee!-Old fond eyes,  
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,  
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,  
To temper clay. Yea, is it come to this?  
Let it be so. Yet have I left a daughter,  
Who I am sure is kind and comfortable.  
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails  
She'll flay thy wolvisish visage. Thou shalt find  
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant thee.

Exeunt [Lear, Kent, and  
Attendants].

Gon. Do you mark that, my lord?

Alb. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,  
To the great love I bear you -

Gon. Pray you, content.-What, Oswald, ho!

[To the Fool] You, sir, more knave than fool, after  
your master!

Fool. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry! Take the fool with thee.

A fox when one has caught her,  
And such a daughter,  
Should sure to the slaughter,  
If my cap would buy a halter.  
So the fool follows

after. Exit.

Gon. This man hath had good counsel! A hundred knights?  
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep  
At point a hundred knights; yes, that on every dream,  
Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,  
He may enguard his dotage with their pow'rs  
And hold our lives in mercy.-Oswald, I say!

Alb. Well, you may fear too far.

Gon. Safer than trust too far.  
Let me still take away the harms I fear,  
Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.  
What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister.  
If she sustain him and his hundred knights,  
When I have show'd th' unfitness-

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

How now, Oswald?

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

Osw. Yes, madam.

Gon. Take you some company, and away to horse!  
Inform her full of my particular fear,  
And thereto add such reasons of your own  
As may compact it more. Get you gone,  
And hasten your return. [Exit Oswald.] No, no, my  
lord!

This milky gentleness and course of yours,  
Though I condemn it not, yet, under pardon,  
You are much more at task for want of wisdom  
Than prais'd for harmful mildness.

Alb. How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell.  
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

Gon. Nay then-

Alb. Well, well; th' event.

Exeunt.

Scene V.

Court before the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool.

Lear. Go you before to Gloucester with these letters.  
Acquaint my  
daughter no further with anything you know than  
comes from her  
demand out of the letter. If your diligence be not  
speedy, I  
shall be there afore you.

Kent. I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered  
your letter.

Exit.

Fool. If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in  
danger of

kibes?

Lear. Ay, boy.

Fool. Then I prithee be merry. Thy wit shall ne'er go  
slip-shod.

Lear. Ha, ha, ha!

Fool. Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee  
kindly; for though

she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I  
can tell

what I can tell.

Lear. What canst tell, boy?

Fool. She'll taste as like this as a crab does to a  
crab. Thou

canst tell why one's nose stands i' th' middle son's  
face?

Lear. No.

Fool. Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose,  
that what a

man cannot smell out, 'a may spy into.

Lear. I did her wrong.

Fool. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear. No.

Fool. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a  
house.

Lear. Why?

Fool. Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his  
daughters,

and leave his horns without a case.

Lear. I will forget my nature. So kind a father!-Be my  
horses

ready?

Fool. Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the  
seven stars

are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

Lear. Because they are not eight?

Fool. Yes indeed. Thou wouldst make a good fool.

Lear. To tak't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

Fool. If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee  
beaten for being  
old before thy time.

Lear. How's that?

Fool. Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst  
been wise.

Lear. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

[Enter a Gentleman.]

How now? Are the horses ready?

Gent. Ready, my lord.

Lear. Come, boy.

Fool. She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,  
Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut  
shorter

Exeunt.

ACT II. Scene I.

A court within the Castle of the Earl of Gloucester.

Enter [Edmund the] Bastard and Curan, meeting.

Edm. Save thee, Curan.

Cur. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and  
given him

notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his  
Duchess will be  
here with him this night.

Edm. How comes that?

Cur. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad  
-I mean the

whisper'd ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing  
arguments?

Edm. Not I. Pray you, what are they?

Cur. Have you heard of no likely wars toward 'twixt the  
two Dukes

of Cornwall and Albany?

Edm. Not a word.

Cur. You may do, then, in time. Fare you well,  
sir. Exit.

Edm. The Duke be here to-night? The better! best!

This weaves itself perforce into my business.

My father hath set guard to take my brother;

And I have one thing, of a queasy question,  
Which I must act. Briefness and fortune, work!  
Brother, a word! Descend! Brother, I say!

Enter Edgar.

My father watches. O sir, fly this place!  
Intelligence is given where you are hid.  
You have now the good advantage of the night.  
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?  
He's coming hither; now, i' th' night, i' th' haste,  
And Regan with him. -Have you nothing said  
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany  
Advise yourself.

Edg. I am sure on't, not a word.

Edm. I hear my father coming. Pardon me!

In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.  
Draw, seem to defend yourself; now quit you well.-  
Yield! Come before my father. Light, ho, here!  
Fly, brother.-Torches, torches!-So farewell.

Exit

Edgar.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion  
Of my more fierce endeavour. [Stabs his arm.] I have  
seen

drunkards

Do more than this in sport.-Father, father!-  
Stop, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester, and Servants with torches.

Glou. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edm. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,  
Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon  
To stand's auspicious mistress.

Glou. But where is he?

Edm. Look, sir, I bleed.

Glou. Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edm. Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could-

Glou. Pursue him, ho! Go after. [Exeunt some  
Servants].

By no means what?

Edm. Persuade me to the murther of your lordship;  
But that I told him the revenging gods  
'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend;  
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond  
The child was bound to th' father-sir, in fine,

Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion  
With his prepared sword he charges home  
My unprovided body, lanch'd mine arm;  
But when he saw my best alarum'd spirits,  
Bold in the quarrel's right, rous'd to th' encounter,  
Or whether gasted by the noise I made,  
Full suddenly he fled.

Glou. Let him fly far.

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;  
And found-dispatch. The noble Duke my master,  
My worthy arch and patron, comes to-night.  
By his authority I will proclaim it  
That he which find, him shall deserve our thanks,  
Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake;  
He that conceals him, death.

Edm. When I dissuaded him from his intent

And found him pight to do it, with curst speech  
I threaten'd to discover him. He replied,  
'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think,  
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal  
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee  
Make thy words faith'd? No. What I should deny  
(As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce  
My very character), I'd turn it all  
To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice;  
And thou must make a dullard of the world,  
If they not thought the profits of my death  
Were very pregnant and potential spurs  
To make thee seek it.'

Glou. Strong and fast'ned villain!

Would he deny his letter? I never got him.

Tucket

within.

Hark, the Duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.  
All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not scape;  
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have due note of him, and of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants.

Corn. How now, my noble friend? Since I came hither

(Which I can call but now) I have heard strange news.

Reg. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short

Which can pursue th' offender. How dost, my lord?  
Glou. O madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd!  
Reg. What, did my father's godson seek your life?  
He whom my father nam'd? Your Edgar?  
Glou. O lady, lady, shame would have it hid!  
Reg. Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tend upon my father?  
Glou. I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad!  
Edm. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.  
Reg. No marvel then though he were ill affected.  
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,  
To have th' expense and waste of his revenues.  
I have this present evening from my sister  
Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions  
That, if they come to sojourn at my house,  
I'll not be there.  
Corn. Nor I, assure thee, Regan.  
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A childlike office.  
Edm. 'Twas my duty, sir.  
Glou. He did bewray his practice, and receiv'd  
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.  
Corn. Is he pursued?  
Glou. Ay, my good lord.  
Corn. If he be taken, he shall never more  
Be fear'd of doing harm. Make your own purpose,  
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,  
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant  
So much commend itself, you shall be ours.  
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;  
You we first seize on.  
Edm. I shall serve you, sir,  
Truly, however else.  
Glou. For him I thank your Grace.  
Corn. You know not why we came to visit you-  
Reg. Thus out of season, threading dark-ey'd night.  
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise,  
Wherein we must have use of your advice.  
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
Of differences, which I best thought it fit  
To answer from our home. The several messengers  
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow  
Your needful counsel to our business,  
Which craves the instant use.  
Glou. I serve you, madam.  
Your Graces are right welcome.

Exeunt.

Flourish.

Scene II.  
Before Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Kent and [Oswald the] Steward, severally.

Osw. Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house?

Kent. Ay.

Osw. Where may we set our horses?

Kent. I' th' mire.

Osw. Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.

Kent. I love thee not.

Osw. Why then, I care not for thee.

Kent. If I had thee in Lipsbury Pinfold, I would make  
thee care for  
me.

Osw. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

Kent. Fellow, I know thee.

Osw. What dost thou know me for?

Kent. A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a  
base, proud,  
shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound,  
filthy,  
worsted-stocking knave; a lily-liver'd, action-  
taking, whoreson,  
glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-  
trunk-  
inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way  
of good  
service, and art nothing but the composition of a  
knave, beggar,  
coward, pander, and the son and heir of a mongrel  
bitch; one  
whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou  
deny the least  
syllable of thy addition.

Osw. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to  
rail on one

that's neither known of thee nor knows thee!

Kent. What a brazen-fac'd varlet art thou, to deny thou  
knowest me!

Is it two days ago since I beat thee and tripp'd up  
thy heels

before the King? [Draws his sword.] Draw, you rogue!  
for, though

it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o'



th'

moonshine o' you. Draw, you whoreson cullionly  
barbermonger!

draw!

Osw. Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent. Draw, you rascal! You come with letters against  
the King, and

take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of  
her father.

Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks!  
Draw, you

rascal! Come your ways!

Osw. Help, ho! murther! help!

Kent. Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue! Stand, you neat  
slave!

Strike!

[Beats him.]

Osw. Help, ho! murther! murther!

Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Gloucester,  
Cornwall,

Regan, Servants.

Edm. How now? What's the matter? Parts [them].

Kent. With you, Goodman boy, an you please! Come, I'll  
flesh ye!

Come on, young master!

Glou. Weapon? arms? What's the matter here?

Corn. Keep peace, upon your lives!

He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

Reg. The messengers from our sister and the King

Corn. What is your difference? Speak.

Osw. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent. No marvel, you have so bestirr'd your valour. You  
cowardly

rascal, nature disclaims in thee; a tailor made thee.

Corn. Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man?

Kent. Ay, a tailor, sir. A stonecutter or a painter  
could not have

made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at  
the trade.

Corn. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Osw. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spar'd

At suit of his grey beard-

Kent. Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My  
lord, if

you'll give me leave, I will tread this unbolted

villain into

mortar and daub the walls of a jakes with him.

'Spare my grey

beard,' you wagtail?

Corn. Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

Kent. Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

Corn. Why art thou angry?

Kent. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,  
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain  
Which are too intrinse t' unloose; smooth every

passion

That in the natures of their lords rebel,  
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;  
Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks  
With every gale and vary of their masters,  
Knowing naught (like dogs) but following.  
A plague upon your epileptic visage!  
Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?  
Goose, an I had you upon Sarum Plain,  
I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

Corn. What, art thou mad, old fellow?

Glou. How fell you out? Say that.

Kent. No contraries hold more antipathy  
Than I and such a knave.

Corn. Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault?

Kent. His countenance likes me not.

Corn. No more perchance does mine, or his, or hers.

Kent. Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain.  
I have seen better faces in my time  
Than stands on any shoulder that I see  
Before me at this instant.

Corn. This is some fellow

Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect  
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb  
Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he!  
An honest mind and plain-he must speak truth!  
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.  
These kind of knaves I know which in this plainness  
Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends  
Than twenty silly-ducking observants  
That stretch their duties nicely.

Kent. Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,  
Under th' allowance of your great aspect,  
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire  
On flickering Phoebus' front-

Corn. What mean'st by this?

Kent. To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I

know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguil'd you in a plain

accent was a plain knave, which, for my part, I will not be,

though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't.

Corn. What was th' offence you gave him?

Osw. I never gave him any.

It pleas'd the King his master very late  
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;  
When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,  
Tripp'd me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd  
And put upon him such a deal of man  
That worthied him, got praises of the King  
For him attempting who was self-subdu'd;  
And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,  
Drew on me here again.

Kent. None of these rogues and cowards

But Ajax is their fool.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks!

You stubborn ancient knave, you reverent braggart,  
We'll teach you-

Kent. Sir, I am too old to learn.

Call not your stocks for me. I serve the King;  
On whose employment I was sent to you.  
You shall do small respect, show too bold malice  
Against the grace and person of my master,  
Stocking his messenger.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honour,  
There shall he sit till noon.

Reg. Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night too!

Kent. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,  
You should not use me so.

Reg. Sir, being his knave, I will.

Corn. This is a fellow of the selfsame colour

Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks!  
Stocks

brought out.

Glou. Let me beseech your Grace not to do so.

His fault is much, and the good King his master  
Will check him for't. Your purpos'd low correction  
Is such as basest and contemn'dest wretches  
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses  
Are punish'd with. The King must take it ill

That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,  
Should have him thus restrain'd.

Corn. I'll answer that.

Reg. My sister may receive it much more worse,  
To have her gentleman abus'd, assaulted,  
For following her affairs. Put in his legs.-

[Kent is put in the  
stocks.]

Come, my good lord, away.

Exeunt [all but Gloucester and  
Kent].

Glou. I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the Duke's  
pleasure,

Whose disposition, all the world well knows,  
Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd. I'll entreat for  
thee.

Kent. Pray do not, sir. I have watch'd and travell'd  
hard.

Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.  
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.  
Give you good morrow!

Glou. The Duke's to blame in this; 'twill be ill  
taken. Exit.

Kent. Good King, that must approve the common saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st  
To the warm sun!  
Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,  
That by thy comfortable beams I may  
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles  
But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd  
Of my obscured course-and [reads] 'shall find time  
From this enormous state, seeking to give  
Losses their remedies'-All weary and o'erwatch'd,  
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
This shameful lodging.  
Fortune, good night; smile once more, turn thy  
wheel. Sleeps.

Scene III.  
The open country.

Enter Edgar.

Edg. I heard myself proclaim'd,  
And by the happy hollow of a tree  
Escap'd the hunt. No port is free, no place  
That guard and most unusual vigilance

Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may scape,  
I will preserve myself; and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury, in contempt of man,  
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,  
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,  
And with presented nakedness outface  
The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
Enforce their charity. 'Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!'  
That's something yet! Edgar I nothing

am.

Exit.

Scene IV.

Before Gloucester's Castle; Kent in the stocks.

Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.

Lear. 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,  
And not send back my messenger.

Gent. As I learn'd,  
The night before there was no purpose in them  
Of this remove.

Kent. Hail to thee, noble master!

Lear. Ha!

Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent. No, my lord.

Fool. Ha, ha! look! he wears cruel garters. Horses are  
tied by the

head, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by th'  
loins, and men

by th' legs. When a man's over-lusty at legs, then  
he wears

wooden nether-stocks.

Lear. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook  
To set thee here?

Kent. It is both he and she-  
Your son and daughter.

Lear. No.

Kent. Yes.

Lear. No, I say.

Kent. I say yea.

Lear. No, no, they would not!

Kent. Yes, they have.

Lear. By Jupiter, I swear no!

Kent. By Juno, I swear ay!

Lear. They durst not do't;

They would not, could not do't. 'Tis worse than  
murther

To do upon respect such violent outrage.

Resolve me with all modest haste which way

Thou mightst deserve or they impose this usage,

Coming from us.

Kent. My lord, when at their home

I did commend your Highness' letters to them,

Ere I was risen from the place that show'd

My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,

Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth

From Goneril his mistress salutations;

Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,

Which presently they read; on whose contents,

They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse,

Commanded me to follow and attend

The leisure of their answer, gave me cold looks,

And meeting here the other messenger,

Whose welcome I perceiv'd had poison'd mine-

Being the very fellow which of late

Display'd so saucily against your Highness-

Having more man than wit about me, drew.

He rais'd the house with loud and coward cries.

Your son and daughter found this trespass worth

The shame which here it suffers.

Fool. Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that  
way.

Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind;

But fathers that bear bags

Shall see their children kind.

Fortune, that arrant whore,

Ne'er turns the key to th' poor.

But for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours  
for thy

daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

Lear. O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

Hysterica passio! Down, thou climbing sorrow!

Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

Kent. With the Earl, sir, here within.

Lear. Follow me not;  
Stay here.

Exit.

Gent. Made you no more offence but what you speak of?  
Kent. None.

How chance the King comes with so small a number?

Fool. An thou hadst been set i' th' stocks for that  
question,

thou'dst well deserv'd it.

Kent. Why, fool?

Fool. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee  
there's no

labouring i' th' winter. All that follow their noses  
are led by

their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose  
among twenty

but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold  
when a great

wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with  
following

it; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw  
thee after.

When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me  
mine again. I

would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool  
gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,

And follows but for form,

Will pack when it begins to rain

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry; the fool will stay,

And let the wise man fly.

The knave turns fool that runs away;

The fool no knave, perdy.

Kent. Where learn'd you this, fool?

Fool. Not i' th' stocks, fool.

Enter Lear and Gloucester

Lear. Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are  
weary?

They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches-

The images of revolt and flying off!

Fetch me a better answer.

Glou. My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the Duke,

How unremovable and fix'd he is

In his own course.

Lear. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!

Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

Glou. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

Lear. Inform'd them? Dost thou understand me, man?

Glou. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear  
father

Would with his daughter speak, commands her service.

Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!

Fiery? the fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that-

No, but not yet! May be he is not well.

Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound. We are not ourselves

When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind

To suffer with the body. I'll forbear;

And am fallen out with my more headier will,

To take the indispos'd and sickly fit

For the sound man.-Death on my state! Wherefore

Should be sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the Duke and her

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.

Go tell the Duke and's wife I'd speak with them-

Now, presently. Bid them come forth and hear me,

Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum

Till it cry sleep to death.

Glou. I would have all well betwixt  
you. Exit.

Lear. O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!

Fool. Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels  
when she

put 'em i' th' paste alive. She knapp'd em o' th'  
coxcombs with

a stick and cried 'Down, wantons, down!' 'Twas her  
brother that,

in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants.

Lear. Good morrow to you both.

Corn. Hail to your Grace!

Kent here set at  
liberty.

Reg. I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason

I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad,



I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,  
Sepulchring an adultress. [To Kent] O, are you free?  
Some other time for that. -Beloved Regan,  
Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here!

[Lays his hand on his  
heart.]

I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe  
With how depriv'd a quality-O Regan!  
Reg. I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope  
You less know how to value her desert  
Than she to scant her duty.

Lear. Say, how is that?

Reg. I cannot think my sister in the least  
Would fail her obligation. If, sir, perchance  
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,  
'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,  
As clears her from all blame.

Lear. My curses on her!

Reg. O, sir, you are old!

Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine. You should be rul'd, and led  
By some discretion that discerns your State  
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you  
That to our sister you do make return;  
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

Lear. Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house:  
'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. [Kneels.]  
Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg  
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.'

Reg. Good sir, no more! These are unsightly tricks.  
Return you to my sister.

Lear. [rises] Never, Regan!

She hath abated me of half my train;  
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart.  
All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall  
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness!

Corn. Fie, sir, fie!

Lear. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,  
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the pow'rful sun,  
To fall and blast her pride!

Reg. O the blest gods! so will you wish on me  
When the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.  
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give  
Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce; but  
thine

Do comfort, and not burn. 'Tis not in thee  
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,  
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,  
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt  
Against my coming in. Thou better know'st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.  
Thy half o' th' kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endow'd.

Reg. Good sir, to th' purpose.

Tucket

within.

Lear. Who put my man i' th' stocks?

Corn. What trumpet's that?

Reg. I know't--my sister's. This approves her letter,  
That she would soon be here.

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

Is your lady come?

Lear. This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride  
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.  
Out, varlet, from my sight!

Corn. What means your Grace?

Enter Goneril.

Lear. Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope  
Thou didst not know on't.--Who comes here? O heavens!  
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience--if yourselves are old,  
Make it your cause! Send down, and take my part!  
[To Goneril] Art not asham'd to look upon this  
beard? -

O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

Gon. Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?  
All's not offence that indiscretion finds  
And dotage terms so.

Lear. O sides, you are too tough!

Will you yet hold? How came my man i' th' stocks?

Corn. I set him there, sir; but his own disorders  
Deserv'd much less advancement.

Lear. You? Did you?

Reg. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.  
If, till the expiration of your month,  
You will return and sojourn with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train, come then to me.  
I am now from home, and out of that provision  
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear. Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?  
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
To wage against the enmity o' th' air,  
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl-  
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?  
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took  
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought  
To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg  
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?  
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter  
To this detested groom. [Points at

Oswald.]

Gon. At your choice, sir.

Lear. I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.  
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell.  
We'll no more meet, no more see one another.  
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;  
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,  
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,  
A plague sore, an embossed carbuncle  
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee.  
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it.  
I do not bid the Thunder-bearer shoot  
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.  
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure;  
I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,  
I and my hundred knights.

Reg. Not altogether so.  
I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided  
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;  
For those that mingle reason with your passion  
Must be content to think you old, and so-  
But she knows what she does.

Lear. Is this well spoken?

Reg. I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers?  
Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house  
Should many people, under two commands,  
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

Gon. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance

From those that she calls servants, or from mine?  
Reg. Why not, my lord? If then they chanc'd to slack ye,  
We could control them. If you will come to me  
(For now I spy a danger), I entreat you  
To bring but five-and-twenty. To no more  
Will I give place or notice.

Lear. I gave you all-

Reg. And in good time you gave it!

Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries;

But kept a reservation to be followed

With such a number. What, must I come to you

With five-and-twenty, Regan? Said you so?

Reg. And speak't again my lord. No more with me.

Lear. 'Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd  
When others are more wicked; not being the worst  
Stands in some rank of praise. [To Goneril] I'll go  
with thee.

Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,

And thou art twice her love.

Gon. Hear, me, my lord.

What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,

To follow in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

Reg. What need one?

Lear. O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars

Are in the poorest thing superfluous.

Allow not nature more than nature needs,

Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady:

If only to go warm were gorgeous,

Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st

Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need-

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,

As full of grief as age; wretched in both.

If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts

Against their father, fool me not so much

To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,

And let not women's weapons, water drops,

Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags!

I will have such revenges on you both

That all the world shall-I will do such things-

What they are yet, I know not; but they shall be

The terrors of the earth! You think I'll weep.

No, I'll not weep.

I have full cause of weeping, but this heart

Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws

Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool.

Storm and

tempest.

Corn. Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

Reg. This house is little; the old man and's people  
Cannot be well bestow'd.

Gon. 'Tis his own blame; hath put himself from rest  
And must needs taste his folly.

Reg. For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,  
But not one follower.

Gon. So am I purpos'd.

Where is my Lord of Gloucester?

Corn. Followed the old man forth.

Enter Gloucester.

He is return'd.

Glou. The King is in high rage.

Corn. Whither is he going?

Glou. He calls to horse, but will I know not whither.

Corn. 'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself.

Gon. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

Glou. Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds  
Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about  
There's scarce a bush.

Reg. O, sir, to wilful men

The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors.

He is attended with a desperate train,  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abus'd, wisdom bids fear.

Corn. Shut up your doors, my lord: 'tis a wild night.

My Regan counsels well. Come out o' th'

storm. [Exeunt.]

ACT III. Scene I.

A heath.

Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman at several  
doors.

Kent. Who's there, besides foul weather?

Gent. One minded like the weather.

Kent. I know you. Where's the King?

Gent. Contending with the fretful elements

Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,

Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,

That things might change or cease; tears his white  
hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,  
Catch in their fury and make nothing of;  
Strives in his little world of man to outscorn  
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.  
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,  
The lion and the belly-pinched wolf  
Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,  
And bids what will take all.

Kent. But who is with him?

Gent. None but the fool, who labours to outjest  
His heart-struck injuries.

Kent. Sir, I do know you,  
And dare upon the warrant of my note  
Commend a dear thing to you. There is division  
(Although as yet the face of it be cover'd  
With mutual cunning) 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;  
Who have (as who have not, that their great stars  
Thron'd and set high?) servants, who seem no less,  
Which are to France the spies and speculations  
Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,  
Either in snuffs and packings of the Dukes,  
Or the hard rein which both of them have borne  
Against the old kind King, or something deeper,  
Whereof, perchance, these are but furnishings-  
But, true it is, from France there comes a power  
Into this scattered kingdom, who already,  
Wise in our negligence, have secret feet  
In some of our best ports and are at point  
To show their open banner. Now to you:  
If on my credit you dare build so far  
To make your speed to Dover, you shall find  
Some that will thank you, making just report  
Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow  
The King hath cause to plain.  
I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,  
And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
This office to you.

Gent. I will talk further with you.

Kent. No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more  
Than my out-wall, open this purse and take  
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia  
(As fear not but you shall), show her this ring,  
And she will tell you who your fellow is  
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!  
I will go seek the King.

Gent. Give me your hand. Have you no more to say?

Kent. Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:  
That, when we have found the King (in which your pain  
That way, I'll this), he that first lights on him  
Holla the other.

Exeunt

[severally].

Scene II.

Another part of the heath.

Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool.

Lear. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes. spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the  
cocks!

You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world,  
Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,  
That makes ingrateful man!

Fool. O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is  
better than this  
rain water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy  
daughters  
blessing! Here's a night pities nether wise men nor  
fools.

Lear. Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.  
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.  
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,  
You owe me no subscription. Then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That will with two pernicious daughters join  
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this! O! O! 'tis foul!

Fool. He that has a house to put 's head in has a good  
head-piece.

The codpiece that will house  
Before the head has any,  
The head and he shall louse:  
So beggars marry many.  
The man that makes his toe  
What he his heart should make

Shall of a corn cry woe,  
And turn his sleep to wake.

For there was never yet fair woman but she made  
mouths in a  
glass.

Enter Kent.

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience;  
I will say nothing.

Kent. Who's there?

Fool. Marry, here's grace and a codpiece; that's a wise  
man and a  
fool.

Kent. Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night  
Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies  
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark  
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry  
Th' affliction nor the fear.

Lear. Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes  
Unwhipp'd of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand;  
Thou perjur'd, and thou simular man of virtue  
That art incestuous. Caitiff, in pieces shake  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Hast practis'd on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,  
Rive your concealing continents, and cry  
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
More sinn'd against than sinning.

Kent. Alack, bareheaded?  
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;  
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.  
Repose you there, whilst I to this hard house  
(More harder than the stones whereof 'tis rais'd,  
Which even but now, demanding after you,  
Denied me to come in) return, and force  
Their scantied courtesy.

Lear. My wits begin to turn.  
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?  
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,



That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.  
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool. [sings]

He that has and a little tiny wit-  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain-  
Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

Lear. True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

Exeunt [Lear and

Kent].

Fool. This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll  
speak a

prophecy ere I go:

When priests are more in word than matter;  
When brewers mar their malt with water;  
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,  
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;  
When every case in law is right,  
No squire in debt nor no poor knight;  
When slanders do not live in tongues,  
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;  
When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,  
And bawds and whores do churches build:  
Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion.  
Then comes the time, who lives to see't,  
That going shall be us'd with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before  
his time.

Exit.

Scene III.

Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Gloucester and Edmund.

Glou. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural  
dealing! When

I desir'd their leave that I might pity him, they  
took from me

the use of mine own house, charg'd me on pain of  
perpetual

displeasure neither to speak of him, entreat for  
him, nor any

way sustain him.

Edm. Most savage and unnatural!

Glou. Go to; say you nothing. There is division betwixt

the Dukes,

and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter this

night-'tis dangerous to be spoken-I have lock'd the letter in my

closet. These injuries the King now bears will be revenged home;

there's part of a power already footed; we must incline to the

King. I will seek him and privily relieve him. Go you and

maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him

perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. Though I

die fort, as no less is threat'ned me, the King my old, master

must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund.

Pray you be careful.

Exit.

Edm. This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the Duke

Instantly know, and of that letter too.

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me

That which my father loses-no less than all.

The younger rises when the old doth fall.

Exit.

Scene IV.

The heath. Before a hovel.

Storm still. Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool.

Kent. Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.

The tyranny of the open night's too rough

For nature to endure.

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm

Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee;

But where the greater malady is fix'd,

The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;

But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,

Thou'dst meet the bear i' th' mouth. When the mind's free,

The body's delicate. The tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home!  
No, I will weep no more. In such a night  
'To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.  
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!  
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all!  
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that!  
No more of that.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Prithee go in thyself; seek thine own case.

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

[To the Fool] In, boy; go first.-You houseless  
poverty-

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

Exit

[Fool].

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them  
And show the heavens more just.

Edg. [within] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor  
Tom!

Enter Fool [from the hovel].

Fool. Come not in here, nuncle, here's a spirit. Help  
me, help me!

Kent. Give me thy hand. Who's there?

Fool. A spirit, a spirit! He says his name's poor Tom.

Kent. What art thou that dost grumble there i' th'  
straw?

Come forth.

Enter Edgar [disguised as a madman].

Edg. Away! the foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp  
hawthorn

blows the cold wind. Humh! go to thy cold bed, and

warm thee.

Lear. Hast thou given all to thy two daughters, and art  
thou come  
to this?

Edg. Who gives anything to poor Tom? whom the foul  
fiend hath led  
through fire and through flame, through ford and  
whirlpool, o'er  
bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his  
pillow and  
halters in his pew, set ratsbane by his porridge,  
made him proud  
of heart, to ride on a bay trotting horse over four-  
inch'd  
bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor.

Bless thy five

wits! Tom's acold. O, do de, do de, do de. Bless  
thee from  
whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom  
some charity,  
whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him  
now-and there  
-and there again-and there!

Storm

still.

Lear. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?  
Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give 'em all?

Fool. Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all  
sham'd.

Lear. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air  
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!  
Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdu'd nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.  
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot  
Those pelican daughters.

Edg. Pillicock sat on Pillicock's Hill. 'Allow, 'allow,  
loo, loo!

Fool. This cold night will turn us all to fools and  
madmen.

Edg. Take heed o' th' foul fiend; obey thy parents:  
keep thy word  
justly; swear not; commit not with man's sworn  
spouse; set not  
thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's acold.

Lear. What hast thou been?

Edg. A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curl'd my hair,

wore gloves in my cap; serv'd the lust of my mistress' heart and

did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake

words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven; one that

slept in the contriving of lust, and wak'd to do it. Wine lov'd

I deeply, dice dearly; and in woman out-paramour'd the Turk.

False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox

in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.

Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray

thy poor heart to woman. Keep thy foot out of brothel, thy hand

out of placket, thy pen from lender's book, and defy the foul

fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind; says

suum, mun, hey, no, nonny. Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let

him trot by.

Storm

still.

Lear. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy

uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than

this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast

no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three

on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked

animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Collie, unbutton

here.

[Tears at his

clothes.]

Fool. Prithee, nuncle, be contented! 'Tis a naughty

night to swim  
in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an  
old lecher's  
heart-a small spark, all the rest on's body cold.  
Look, here  
comes a walking fire.

Enter Gloucester with a torch.

Edg. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins  
at curfew,  
and walks till the first cock. He gives the web and  
the pin,  
squints the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the  
white wheat,  
and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;  
He met the nightmare, and her nine fold;  
Bid her alight  
And her troth plight,  
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

Kent. How fares your Grace?

Lear. What's he?

Kent. Who's there? What is't you seek?

Glou. What are you there? Your names?

Edg. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad,  
the todpole,  
the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his  
heart, when  
the foul fiend rages' eats cow-dung for sallets,  
swallows the  
old rat and the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle  
of the  
standing pool; who is whipp'd from tithing to  
tithing, and  
stock-punish'd and imprison'd; who hath had three  
suits to his  
back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and  
weapons to  
wear;

But mice and rats, and such small deer,  
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin! peace, thou

fiend!

Glou. What, hath your Grace no better company?

Edg. The prince of darkness is a gentleman!

Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.

Glou. Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord, iso  
That it doth hate what gets it.

Edg. Poor Tom's acold.

Glou. Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer

T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands.

Though their injunction be to bar my doors

And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,

Yet have I ventur'd to come seek you out

And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

Lear. First let me talk with this philosopher.

What is the cause of thunder?

Kent. Good my lord, take his offer; go into th' house.

Lear. I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.

What is your study?

Edg. How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

Lear. Let me ask you one word in private.

Kent. Importune him once more to go, my lord.

His wits begin t' unsettle.

Glou. Canst thou blame him?

Storm

still.

His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent!

He said it would be thus-poor banish'd man!

Thou say'st the King grows mad: I'll tell thee,

friend,

I am almost mad myself. I had a son,

Now outlaw'd from my blood. He sought my life

But lately, very late. I lov'd him, friend-

No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,

The grief hath craz'd my wits. What a night's this!

I do beseech your Grace-

Lear. O, cry you mercy, sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.

Edg. Tom's acold.

Glou. In, fellow, there, into th' hovel; keep thee warm.

Lear. Come, let's in all.

Kent. This way, my lord.

Lear. With him!

I will keep still with my philosopher.

Kent. Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the fellow.

Glou. Take him you on.

Kent. Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

Lear. Come, good Athenian.

Glou. No words, no words! hush.

Edg. Child Rowland to the dark tower came;  
His word was still

Fie, foh, and fum!  
I smell the blood of a British man.

Exeunt.

Scene V.  
Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Cornwall and Edmund.

Corn. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Edm. How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus  
gives way to

loyalty, something fears me to think of.

Corn. I now perceive it was not altogether your  
brother's evil

disposition made him seek his death; but a provoking  
merit, set

awork by a reproveable badness in himself.

Edm. How malicious is my fortune that I must repent to  
be just!

This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an  
intelligent party to the advantages of France. O  
heavens! that

this treason were not-or not I the detector!

Corn. Go with me to the Duchess.

Edm. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have  
mighty

business in hand.

Corn. True or false, it hath made thee Earl of  
Gloucester.

Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready  
for our

apprehension.

Edm. [aside] If I find him comforting the King, it will  
stuff his

suspicion more fully.-I will persevere in my course  
of loyalty,

though the conflict be sore between that and my  
blood.

Corn. I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a  
dearer

father in my love.

Exeunt.

Scene VI.



A farmhouse near Gloucester's Castle.  
Enter Gloucester, Lear, Kent, Fool, and Edgar.

Glou. Here is better than the open air; take it  
thankfully. I will  
piece out the comfort with what addition I can. I  
will not be  
long from you.

Kent. All the power of his wits have given way to his  
impatience.

The gods reward your kindness!

Exit

[Gloucester].

Edg. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an  
angler in the  
lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the  
foul fiend.

Fool. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a  
gentleman or a  
yeoman.

Lear. A king, a king!

Fool. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his  
son; for he's a  
mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.  
Lear. To have a thousand with red burning spits

Come hissing in upon 'em-

Edg. The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a  
horse's  
health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

Lear. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.

[To Edgar] Come, sit thou here, most learned  
justicer.

[To the Fool] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you  
she-foxes!

Edg. Look, where he stands and glares! Want'st thou eyes  
at trial, madam?

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.

Fool. Her boat hath a leak,  
And she must not speak  
Why she dares not come over to thee.

Edg. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a  
nightingale.

Hoppedance cries in Tom's belly for two white  
herring. Croak

not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

Kent. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amaz'd.

Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

Lear. I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence.

[To Edgar] Thou, robed man of justice, take thy place.

[To the Fool] And thou, his yokefellow of equity,  
Bench by his side. [To Kent] You are o' th'  
commission,

Sit you too.

Edg. Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

Thy sheep be in the corn;

And for one blast of thy minikin mouth

Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Purr! the cat is gray.

Lear. Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril. I here take my  
oath before

this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor King  
her father.

Fool. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim

What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!

Arms, arms! sword! fire! Corruption in the place!

False justicer, why hast thou let her scape?

Edg. Bless thy five wits!

Kent. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now

That you so oft have boasted to retain?

Edg. [aside] My tears begin to take his part so much

They'll mar my counterfeiting.

Lear. The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.

Edg. Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite;

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,

Bobtail tyke or trundle-tall-

Tom will make them weep and wail;

For, with throwing thus my head,

Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs

and market

towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

Lear. Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her

heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard

hearts? [To Edgar] You, sir-I entertain you for one of my

hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You'll

say they are Persian attire; but let them be chang'd.

Kent. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains.

So, so, so. We'll go to supper i' th' morning. So, so, so.

Fool. And I'll go to bed at noon.

Enter Gloucester.

Glou. Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

Kent. Here, sir; but trouble him not; his wits are gone.

Glou. Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms.

I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.

There is a litter ready; lay him in't

And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet

Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.

If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,

With thine, and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up!

And follow me, that will to some provision

Give thee quick conduct.

Kent. Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses,

Which, if convenience will not allow,

Stand in hard cure. [To the Fool] Come, help to bear thy master.

Thou must not stay behind.

Glou. Come, come, away!

Exeunt [all but

Edgar].

Edg. When we our betters see bearing our woes,

We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind,

Leaving free things and happy shows behind;

But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip

When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.

How light and portable my pain seems now,  
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow,  
He childed as I fathered! Tom, away!  
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray  
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,  
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
What will hap more to-night, safe scape the King!  
Lurk, lurk.

[Exit.]

Scene VII.  
Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, [Edmund the]  
Bastard, and Servants.

Corn. [to Goneril] Post speedily to my lord your  
husband, show him  
this letter. The army of France is landed.-Seek out  
the traitor  
Gloucester.

[Exeunt some of the  
Servants.]

Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes.

Corn. Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our  
sister

company. The revenges we are bound to take upon your  
traitorous

father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the  
Duke where you

are going, to a most festinate preparation. We are  
bound to the

like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent  
betwixt us.

Farewell, dear sister; farewell, my Lord of  
Gloucester.

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

How now? Where's the King?

Osw. My Lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence  
Some five or six and thirty of his knights,  
Hot questrists after him, met him at gate;  
Who, with some other of the lord's dependants,  
Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast  
To have well-armed friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress.

Gon. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Corn. Edmund, farewell.

Exeunt Goneril, [Edmund, and

Oswald].

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

[Exeunt other

Servants.]

Though well we may not pass upon his life

Without the form of justice, yet our power

Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men

May blame, but not control.

Enter Gloucester, brought in by two or three.

Who's there? the traitor?

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.

Glou. What mean, your Graces? Good my friends, consider

You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him, I say.

[Servants

bind him.]

Reg. Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

Glou. Unmerciful lady as you are, I am none.

Corn. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find-

[Regan plucks his

beard.]

Glou. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor!

Glou. Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin

Will quicken, and accuse thee. I am your host.

With robber's hands my hospitable favours

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

Reg. Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

Corn. And what confederacy have you with the traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King?

Speak.

Glou. I have a letter guessingly set down,

Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,

And not from one oppos'd.

Corn. Cunning.

Reg. And false.

Corn. Where hast thou sent the King?

Glou. To Dover.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charg'd at peril-

Corn. Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

Glou. I am tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover, sir?

Glou. Because I would not see thy cruel halls

Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister

In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head

In hell-black night endur'd, would have buoy'd up

And quench'd the steeled fires.

Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.

If wolves had at thy gate bowl'd that stern time,

Thou shouldst have said, 'Good porter, turn the key.'

All cruels else subscrib'd. But I shall see

The winged vengeance overtake such children.

Corn. See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.

Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

Glou. He that will think to live till he be old,

Give me some help!-O cruel! O ye gods!

Reg. One side will mock another. Th' other too!

Corn. If you see vengeance-

1. Serv. Hold your hand, my lord!

I have serv'd you ever since I was a child;

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you bold.

Reg. How now, you dog?

1. Serv. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,

I'd shake it on this quarrel.

Reg. What do you mean?

Corn. My villain!

Draw

and fight.

1. Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

Reg. Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

She takes a sword and runs at him behind.

1. Serv. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left

To see some mischief on him. O!

He dies.

Corn. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!

Where is thy lustre now?

Glou. All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature

To quit this horrid act.

Reg. Out, treacherous villain!

Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he  
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;  
Who is too good to pity thee.

Glou. O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd.

Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

Reg. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
His way to Dover.

Exit [one] with

Gloucester.

How is't, my lord? How look you?

Corn. I have receiv'd a hurt. Follow me, lady.

Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave  
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace.  
Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

Exit [Cornwall, led by

Regan].

2. Serv. I'll never care what wickedness I do,  
If this man come to good.

3. Serv. If she live long,  
And in the end meet the old course of death,  
Women will all turn monsters.

2. Serv. Let's follow the old Earl, and get the bedlam  
To lead him where he would. His roguish madness  
Allows itself to anything.

3. Serv. Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of  
eggs

To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

Exeunt.

ACT IV. Scene I.

The heath.

Enter Edgar.

Edg. Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,  
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. To be worst,  
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,  
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.  
The lamentable change is from the best;  
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts.

Enter Gloucester, led by an Old Man.

But who comes here?

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

Old Man. O my good lord,  
I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant,  
These fourscore years.

Glou. Away, get thee away! Good friend, be gone.  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
Thee they may hurt.

Old Man. You cannot see your way.

Glou. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;  
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. Ah dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath!  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man. How now? Who's there?

Edg. [aside] O gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the  
worst'?

I am worse than e'er I was.

Old Man. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Edg. [aside] And worse I may be yet. The worst is not  
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.'

Old Man. Fellow, where goest?

Glou. Is it a beggarman?

Old Man. Madman and beggar too.

Glou. He has some reason, else he could not beg.

I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm. My son  
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind  
Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more  
since.

As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods.

They kill us for their sport.

Edg. [aside] How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,  
Ang'ring itself and others.-Bless thee, master!

Glou. Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man. Ay, my lord.

Glou. Then prithee get thee gone. If for my sake  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;  
And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man. Alack, sir, he is mad!

Glou. 'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind.



Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure.  
Above the rest, be gone.  
Old Man. I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,  
Come on't what  
will. Exit.  
Glou. Sirrah naked fellow-  
Edg. Poor Tom's acold. [Aside] I cannot daub it further.  
Glou. Come hither, fellow.  
Edg. [aside] And yet I must.-Bless thy sweet eyes, they  
bleed.  
Glou. Know'st thou the way to Dover?  
Edg. Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor  
Tom hath been  
scar'd out of his good wits. Bless thee, good man's  
son, from  
the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at  
once: of  
lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness;  
Mahu, of  
stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of  
mopping and  
mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting  
women. So,  
bless thee, master!  
Glou. Here, take this Purse, thou whom the heavens'  
plagues  
Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched  
Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still  
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,  
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see  
Because he does not feel, feel your pow'r quickly;  
So distribution should undo excess,  
And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?  
Edg. Ay, master.  
Glou. There is a cliff, whose high and bending head  
Looks fearfully in the confined deep.  
Bring me but to the very brim of it,  
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear  
With something rich about me. From that place  
I shall no leading need.  
Edg. Give me thy arm.  
Poor Tom shall lead thee.

Exeunt.

Scene II.

Before the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Goneril and [Edmund the] Bastard.

Gon. Welcome, my lord. I marvel our mild husband  
Not met us on the way.

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

Now, where's your master?

Osw. Madam, within, but never man so chang'd.

I told him of the army that was landed:

He smil'd at it. I told him you were coming:

His answer was, 'The worse.' Of Gloucester's  
treachery

And of the loyal service of his son

When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot

And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out.

What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;

What like, offensive.

Gon. [to Edmund] Then shall you go no further.

It is the cowish terror of his spirit,

That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs

Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way

May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother.

Hasten his musters and conduct his pow'rs.

I must change arms at home and give the distaff

Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant

Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear

(If you dare venture in your own behalf)

A mistress's command. Wear this. [Gives a  
favour.]

Spare speech.

Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,

Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.

Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edm. Yours in the ranks of  
death! Exit.

Gon. My most dear Gloucester!

O, the difference of man and man!

To thee a woman's services are due;

My fool usurps my body.

Osw. Madam, here comes my  
lord. Exit.

Enter Albany.

Gon. I have been worth the whistle.

Alb. O Goneril,

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face! I fear your disposition.  
That nature which contemns its origin  
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.  
She that herself will sliver and disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use.

Gon. No more! The text is foolish.

Alb. Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;  
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?  
Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?  
A father, and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you madded.  
Could my good brother stiffer you to do it?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
It will come,  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep-

Gon. Milk-liver'd man!

That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd  
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,  
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit'st still, and criest  
'Alack, why does he so?'

Alb. See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend  
So horrid as in woman.

Gon. O vain fool!

Alb. Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame!  
Bemaster not thy feature! Were't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

Gon. Marry, your manhood mew!

Enter a Gentleman.

Alb. What news?

Gent. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall is dead,

Slain by his servant, going to put out  
The other eye of Gloucester.

Alb. Gloucester's eyes?

Gent. A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword  
To his great master; who, thereat enrag'd,  
Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead;  
But not without that harmful stroke which since  
Hath pluck'd him after.

Alb. This shows you are above,  
You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
So speedily can venge! But O poor Gloucester!

Gent. Both, both, my lord.

This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer.  
'Tis from your sister.

Gon. [aside] One way I like this well;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester; with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life. Another way  
The news is not so tart.-I'll read, and answer.

Exit.

Alb. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

Gent. Come with my lady hither.

Alb. He is not here.

Gent. No, my good lord; I met him back again.

Alb. Knows he the wickedness?

Gent. Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he inform'd against him,  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

Alb. Gloucester, I live  
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the King,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend.  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

Exeunt.

### Scene III.

The French camp near Dover.

Enter Kent and a Gentleman.

Kent. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back  
know you the  
reason?

Gent. Something he left imperfect in the state, which  
since his  
coming forth is thought of, which imports to the  
kingdom so much  
fear and danger that his personal return was most

required and  
necessary.

Kent. Who hath he left behind him general?

Gent. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

Kent. Did your letters pierce the Queen to any  
demonstration of  
grief?

Gent. Ay, sir. She took them, read them in my presence,  
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down  
Her delicate cheek. It seem'd she was a queen  
Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,  
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it mov'd her?

Gent. Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears  
Were like, a better way. Those happy smilets  
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know  
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence  
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd,  
If all could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?

Gent. Faith, once or twice she heav'd the name of father  
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;  
Cried 'Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!  
Kent! father! sisters! What, i' th' storm? i' th'  
night?

Let pity not be believ'd!' There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
And clamour moisten'd. Then away she started  
To deal with grief alone.

Kent. It is the stars,  
The stars above us, govern our conditions;  
Else one self mate and mate could not beget  
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

Gent. No.

Kent. Was this before the King return'd?

Gent. No, since.

Kent. Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' th' town;  
Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers  
What we are come about, and by no means  
Will yield to see his daughter.

Gent. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sovereign shame so elbows him; his own  
unkindness,

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her

To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
To his dog-hearted daughters-these things sting  
His mind so venomously that burning shame  
Detains him from Cordelia.

Gent. Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

Gent. 'Tis so; they are afoot.

Kent. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear  
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause  
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.  
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve  
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you go  
Along with me.

Exeunt.

Scene IV.  
The French camp.

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Cordelia, Doctor, and  
Soldiers.

Cor. Alack, 'tis he! Why, he was met even now  
As mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud,  
Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,  
With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flow'rs,  
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn. A century send forth.  
Search every acre in the high-grown field  
And bring him to our eye. [Exit an Officer.] What  
can man's

wisdom

In the restoring his bereaved sense?  
He that helps him take all my outward worth.

Doct. There is means, madam.

Our foster nurse of nature is repose,  
The which he lacks. That to provoke in him  
Are many simples operative, whose power  
Will close the eye of anguish.

Cor. All blest secrets,  
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate  
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him!  
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. News, madam.

The British pow'rs are marching hitherward.  
Cor. 'Tis known before. Our preparation stands  
In expectation of them. O dear father,  
It is thy business that I go about.  
Therefore great France  
My mourning and important tears hath pitied.  
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,  
But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right.  
Soon may I hear and see him!

Exeunt.

Scene V.  
Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Regan and [Oswald the] Steward.

Reg. But are my brother's pow'rs set forth?  
Osw. Ay, madam.  
Reg. Himself in person there?  
Osw. Madam, with much ado.  
Your sister is the better soldier.  
Reg. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?  
Osw. No, madam.  
Reg. What might import my sister's letter to him?  
Osw. I know not, lady-  
Reg. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.  
It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,  
To let him live. Where he arrives he moves  
All hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone,  
In pity of his misery, to dispatch  
His nighted life; moreover, to descry  
The strength o' th' enemy.  
Osw. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.  
Reg. Our troops set forth to-morrow. Stay with us.  
The ways are dangerous.  
Osw. I may not, madam.  
My lady charg'd my duty in this business.  
Reg. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you  
Transport her purposes by word? Belike,  
Something-I know not what-I'll love thee much-  
Let me unseal the letter.  
Osw. Madam, I had rather-  
Reg. I know your lady does not love her husband;  
I am sure of that; and at her late being here  
She gave strange eliams and most speaking looks  
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.  
Osw. I, madam?  
Reg. I speak in understanding. Y'are! I know't.

Therefore I do advise you take this note.  
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd,  
And more convenient is he for my hand  
Than for your lady's. You may gather more.  
If you do find him, pray you give him this;  
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,  
I pray desire her call her wisdom to her.  
So farewell.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,  
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

Osw. Would I could meet him, madam! I should show  
What party I do follow.

Reg. Fare thee well.

Exeunt.

Scene VI.

The country near Dover.

Enter Gloucester, and Edgar [like a Peasant].

Glou. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?

Edg. You do climb up it now. Look how we labour.

Glou. Methinks the ground is even.

Edg. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

Glou. No, truly.

Edg. Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect  
By your eyes' anguish.

Glou. So may it be indeed.

Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st  
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edg. Y'are much deceiv'd. In nothing am I chang'd  
But in my garments.

Glou. Methinks y'are better spoken.

Edg. Come on, sir; here's the place. Stand still. How  
fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!  
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down  
Hangs one that gathers sampire-dreadful trade!  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,  
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy  
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge  
That on th' unnumb'ed idle pebble chafes  
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,  
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight



Topple down headlong.

Glou. Set me where you stand.

Edg. Give me your hand. You are now within a foot  
Of th' extreme verge. For all beneath the moon  
Would I not leap upright.

Glou. Let go my hand.

Here, friend, is another purse; in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods  
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edg. Now fare ye well, good sir.

Glou. With all my heart.

Edg. [aside]. Why I do trifle thus with his despair  
Is done to cure it.

Glou. O you mighty gods! He kneels.

This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,  
Shake patiently my great affliction off.  
If I could bear it longer and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!  
Now, fellow, fare thee well. He falls [forward and

swoons].

Edg. Gone, sir, farewell.-

And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life when life itself  
Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought,  
By this had thought been past.-Alive or dead?  
Ho you, sir! friend! Hear you, sir? Speak!-  
Thus might he pass indeed. Yet he revives.  
What are you, sir?

Glou. Away, and let me die.

Edg. Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fadom down precipitating,  
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg; but thou dost breathe;  
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art  
sound.

Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.  
Thy life is a miracle. Speak yet again.

Glou. But have I fall'n, or no?

Edg. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height. The shrill-gorg'd lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.

Glou. Alack, I have no eyes!

Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit  
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort

When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage  
And frustrate his proud will.

Edg. Give me your arm.

Up-so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

Glou. Too well, too well.

Edg. This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown o' th' cliff what thing was that  
Which parted from you?

Glou. A poor unfortunate beggar.

Edg. As I stood here below, methought his eyes  
Were two full moon,; he had a thousand noses,  
Horns wheel'd and wav'd like the enridged sea.  
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours  
Of men's impossibility, have preserv'd thee.

Glou. I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear  
Affliction till it do cry out itself  
'Enough, enough,' and die. That thing you speak of,  
I took it for a man. Often 'twould say  
'The fiend, the fiend'-he led me to that place.

Edg. Bear free and patient thoughts.

Enter Lear, mad, [fantastically dressed with weeds].

But who comes here?  
The safer sense will ne'er accommodate  
His master thus.

Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coming;  
I am the King himself.

Edg. O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear. Nature is above art in that respect. There's your  
press

money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-  
keeper. Draw me  
a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace,  
peace; this piece  
of toasted cheese will do't. There's my gauntlet;  
I'll prove it  
on a giant. Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown,  
bird! i'  
th' clout, i' th' clout! Hewgh! Give the word.

Edg. Sweet marjoram.

Lear. Pass.

Glou. I know that voice.

Lear. Ha! Goneril with a white beard? They flatter'd me  
like a dog,  
and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the

black ones

were there. To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything I  
said! 'Ay' and  
'no' too was no good divinity. When the rain came to  
wet me

once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the  
thunder would

not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I  
smelt 'em

out. Go to, they are not men o' their words! They  
told me I was

everything. 'Tis a lie-I am not ague-proof.  
Glou. The trick of that voice I do well remember.

Is't not the King?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king!

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery?

Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.

The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son  
Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.

Behold yond simp'ring dame,

Whose face between her forks presageth snow,  
That minces virtue, and does shake the head  
To hear of pleasure's name.

The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't  
With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,  
Though women all above.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiend's.

There's hell, there's darkness, there's the  
sulphurous pit;

burning, scalding, stench, consumption. Fie, fie,  
fie! pah, pah!

Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to  
sweeten my

imagination. There's money for thee.

Glou. O, let me kiss that hand!

Lear. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

Glou. O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world

Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?

Lear. I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou

squiny at me?

No, do thy worst, blind Cupid! I'll not love. Read  
thou this

challenge; mark but the penning of it.

Glou. Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

Edg. [aside] I would not take this from report. It is,  
And my heart breaks at it.

Lear. Read.

Glou. What, with the case of eyes?

Lear. O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your  
head, nor no  
money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case,  
your purse

in a light. Yet you see how this world goes.

Glou. I see it feelingly.

Lear. What, art mad? A man may see how the world goes  
with no eyes.

Look with thine ears. See how yond justice rails  
upon yond  
simple thief. Hark in thine ear. Change places and,  
handy-dandy,  
which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast  
seen a

farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Glou. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou  
mightst behold

the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in  
office.

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back.

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind

For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the  
cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;

Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.

None does offend, none-I say none! I'll able 'em.

Take that of me, my friend, who have the power

To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes

And, like a scurvy politician, seem

To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now!

Pull off my boots. Harder, harder! So.

Edg. O, matter and impertinency mix'd!

Reason, in madness!

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester.  
Thou must be patient. We came crying bother;  
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell 'the air  
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.  
Glou. Alack, alack the day!

Lear. When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools. This' a good block.  
It were a delicate stratagem to shoe  
A troop of horse with felt. I'll put't in proof,  
And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,  
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Enter a Gentleman [with Attendants].

Gent. O, here he is! Lay hand upon him.-Sir,  
Your most dear daughter-

Lear. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even  
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;  
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon;  
I am cut to th' brains.

Gent. You shall have anything.

Lear. No seconds? All myself?  
Why, this would make a man a man of salt,  
To use his eyes for garden waterpots,  
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

Gent. Good sir-

Lear. I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom. What!  
I will be jovial. Come, come, I am a king;  
My masters, know you that?

Gent. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

Lear. Then there's life in't. Nay, an you get it, you  
shall get it  
by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa!

Exit running. [Attendants  
follow.]

Gent. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,  
Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter  
Who redeems nature from the general curse  
Which twain have brought her to.

Edg. Hail, gentle sir.

Gent. Sir, speed you. What's your will?

Edg. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?

Gent. Most sure and vulgar. Every one hears that  
Which can distinguish sound.

Edg. But, by your favour,  
How near's the other army?

Gent. Near and on speedy foot. The main descry

Stands on the hourly thought.

Edg. I thank you sir. That's all.

Gent. Though that the Queen on special cause is here,  
Her army is mov'd on.

Edg. I thank you, sir

Exit

[Gentleman].

Glou. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;  
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again  
To die before you please!

Edg. Well pray you, father.

Glou. Now, good sir, what are you?

Edg. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,  
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand;  
I'll lead you to some bidding.

Glou. Hearty thanks.

The bounty and the benison of heaven  
To boot, and boot!

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

Osw. A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!  
That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd flesh  
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,  
Briefly thyself remember. The sword is out  
That must destroy thee.

Glou. Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to't.

[Edgar

interposes.]

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence!  
Lest that th' infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edg. Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'cagion.

Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest!

Edg. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor voke  
pass. An chud

ha' bin zwagger'd out of my life, 'twould not ha'  
bin zo long as  
'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th' old man.  
Keep out,

che vore ye, or Ise try whether your costard or my  
ballow be the

harder. Chill be plain with you.

Osw. Out, dunghill!

They

fight.

Edg. Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come! No matter vor  
your foins.

[Oswald  
falls.]

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse.  
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out  
Upon the British party. O, untimely death! Death! He  
dies.

Edg. I know thee well. A serviceable villain,  
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress  
As badness would desire.

Glou. What, is he dead?

Edg. Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see his pockets; these letters that he speaks  
of

May be my friends. He's dead. I am only sorry  
He had no other deathsmen. Let us see.  
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not.  
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;  
Their papers, is more lawful. Reads the  
letter.

'Let our reciprocal vows be rememb'ed. You have  
many  
opportunities to cut him off. If your will want not,  
time and  
place be fruitfully offer'd. There is nothing done,  
if he return  
the conqueror. Then am I the prisoner, and his bed  
my jail; from  
the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply  
the place for  
your labour.

'Your (wife, so I would say) affectionate  
servant,

'Goneril.'

O indistinguish'd space of woman's will!  
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,  
And the exchange my brother! Here in the sands  
Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified  
Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time  
With this ungracious paper strike the sight

Of the death-practis'd Duke, For him 'tis well  
That of thy death and business I can tell.  
Glou. The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense,  
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling  
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.  
So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,  
And woes by wrong imaginations lose  
The knowledge of themselves.

A drum

afar off.

Edg. Give me Your hand.

Far off methinks I hear the beaten drum.

Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

Exeunt.

Scene VII.

A tent in the French camp.

Enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, and Gentleman.

Cor. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work  
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short  
And every measure fall me.

Kent. To be acknowledg'd, madam, is o'erpaid.  
All my reports go with the modest truth;  
Nor more nor clipp'd, but so.

Cor. Be better suited.

These weeds are memories of those worser hours.  
I prithee put them off.

Kent. Pardon, dear madam.

Yet to be known shortens my made intent.  
My boon I make it that you know me not  
Till time and I think meet.

Cor. Then be't so, my good lord. [To the Doctor] How,  
does the King?

Doct. Madam, sleeps still.

Cor. O you kind gods,

Cure this great breach in his abused nature!  
Th' untun'd and jarring senses, O, wind up  
Of this child-changed father!

Doct. So please your Majesty

That we may wake the King? He hath slept long.

Cor. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed  
I' th' sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants.

Gent. Ay, madam. In the heaviness of sleep



We put fresh garments on him.  
Doct. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him.  
I doubt not of his temperance.  
Cor. Very well,

Music.

Doct. Please you draw near. Louder the music there!  
Cor. O my dear father, restoration hang  
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
Have in thy reverence made!  
Kent. Kind and dear princess!  
Cor. Had you not been their father, these white flakes  
Had challeng'd pity of them. Was this a face  
To be oppos'd against the warring winds?  
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?  
In the most terrible and nimble stroke  
Of quick cross lightning? to watch-poor perdu!-  
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,  
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,  
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!  
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
Had not concluded all.-He wakes. Speak to him.  
Doct. Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.  
Cor. How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?  
Lear. You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave.  
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
Do scald like molten lead.  
Cor. Sir, do you know me?  
Lear. You are a spirit, I know. When did you die?  
Cor. Still, still, far wide!  
Doct. He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.  
Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight,  
I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die with pity,  
To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see.  
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd  
Of my condition!  
Cor. O, look upon me, sir,  
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.  
No, sir, you must not kneel.  
Lear. Pray, do not mock me.  
I am a very foolish fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;  
And, to deal plainly,

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;  
Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant  
What place this is; and all the skill I have  
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not  
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;  
For (as I am a man) I think this lady  
To be my child Cordelia.

Cor. And so I am! I am!

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray weep not.

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters

Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.

You have some cause, they have not.

Cor. No cause, no cause.

Lear. Am I in France?

Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear. Do not abuse me.

Doct. Be comforted, good madam. The great rage

You see is kill'd in him; and yet it is danger

To make him even o'er the time he has lost.

Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more

Till further settling.

Cor. Will't please your Highness walk?

Lear. You must bear with me.

Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and  
foolish.

Exeunt. Manent Kent and

Gentleman.

Gent. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was  
so slain?

Kent. Most certain, sir.

Gent. Who is conductor of his people?

Kent. As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

Gent. They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the  
Earl of Kent  
in Germany.

Kent. Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about;  
the powers of  
the kingdom approach apace.

Gent. The arbitrement is like to be bloody.

Fare you well, sir.

[Exit.]

Kent. My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,  
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's  
fought. Exit.

ACT V. Scene I.

The British camp near Dover.

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Edmund, Regan,  
Gentleman,  
and Soldiers.

Edm. Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advis'd by aught  
To change the course. He's full of alteration  
And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.  
[Exit an

Officer.]

Reg. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

Edm. Tis to be doubted, madam.

Reg. Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you.

Tell me-but truly-but then speak the truth-

Do you not love my sister?

Edm. In honour'd love.

Reg. But have you never found my brother's way  
To the forfended place?

Edm. That thought abuses you.

Reg. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

Edm. No, by mine honour, madam.

Reg. I never shall endure her. Dear my lord,  
Be not familiar with her.

Edm. Fear me not.

She and the Duke her husband!

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Albany, Goneril,  
Soldiers.

Gon. [aside] I had rather lose the battle than that  
sister

Should loosen him and me.

Alb. Our very loving sister, well bemet.

Sir, this I hear: the King is come to his daughter.

With others whom the rigour of our state

Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be honest,

I never yet was valiant. For this business,

It toucheth us as France invades our land,

Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear,

Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

Edm. Sir, you speak nobly.

Reg. Why is this reason'd?

Gon. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;

For these domestic and particular broils  
Are not the question here.  
Alb. Let's then determine  
With th' ancient of war on our proceeding.  
Edm. I shall attend you presently at your tent.  
Reg. Sister, you'll go with us?  
Gon. No.  
Reg. 'Tis most convenient. Pray you go with us.  
Gon. [aside] O, ho, I know the riddle. -I will go.

[As they are going out,] enter Edgar [disguised].

Edg. If e'er your Grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

Alb. I'll overtake you.-Speak.

Exeunt [all but Albany and

Edgar].

Edg. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.  
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound  
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,  
I can produce a champion that will prove  
What is avouched there. If you miscarry,  
Your business of the world hath so an end,  
And machination ceases. Fortune love you!

Alb. Stay till I have read the letter.

Edg. I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,  
And I'll appear again.

Alb. Why, fare thee well. I will o'erlook thy paper.

Exit

[Edgar].

Enter Edmund.

Edm. The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.  
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
By diligent discovery; but your haste  
Is now urg'd on you.

Alb. We will greet the  
time.

Exit.

Edm. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;  
Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,  
If both remain alive. To take the widow  
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;  
And hardly shall I carry, out my side,  
Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use

His countenance for the battle, which being done,  
Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy  
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia-  
The battle done, and they within our power,  
Shall never see his pardon; for my state  
Stands on me to defend, not to  
debate. Exit.

Scene II.

A field between the two camps.

Alarum within. Enter, with Drum and Colours, the  
Powers of  
France over the stage, Cordelia with her Father in  
her hand,  
and exeunt.

Enter Edgar and Gloucester.

Edg. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree  
For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive.  
If ever I return to you again,  
I'll bring you comfort.  
Glou. Grace go with you, sir!

Exit

[Edgar].

Alarum and retreat within. Enter Edgar,

Edg. Away, old man! give me thy hand! away!  
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en.  
Give me thy hand! come on!  
Glou. No further, sir. A man may rot even here.  
Edg. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;  
Ripeness is all. Come on.  
Glou. And that's true too.  
Exeunt.

Scene III.

The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, in conquest, with Drum and Colours, Edmund;  
Lear  
and Cordelia as prisoners; Soldiers, Captain.

Edm. Some officers take them away. Good guard  
Until their greater pleasures first be known

That are to censure them.

Cor. We are not the first

Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.

For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;

Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown.

Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.

We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down

And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,

And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh

At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues

Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too-

Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out-

And take upon 's the mystery of things,

As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,

In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones

That ebb and flow by th' moon.

Edm. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,

The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven

And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes.

The goodyears shall devour 'em, flesh and fell,

Ere they shall make us weep! We'll see 'em starv'd first.

Come. Exeunt [Lear and Cordelia, guarded].

Edm. Come hither, Captain; hark.

Take thou this note [gives a paper]. Go follow them to prison.

One step I have advanc'd thee. If thou dost

As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way

To noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men

Are as the time is. To be tender-minded

Does not become a sword. Thy great employment

Will not bear question. Either say thou'lt do't,

Or thrive by other means.

Capt. I'll do't, my lord.

Edm. About it! and write happy when th' hast done.

Mark-I say, instantly; and carry it so

As I have set it down.

Capt. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats;

If it be man's work, I'll do't. Exit.

Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, Soldiers.

Alb. Sir, you have show'd to-day your valiant strain,  
And fortune led you well. You have the captives  
Who were the opposites of this day's strife.  
We do require them of you, so to use them  
As we shall find their merits and our safety  
May equally determine.

Edm. Sir, I thought it fit  
To send the old and miserable King  
To some retention and a pointed guard;  
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,  
To pluck the common bosom on his side  
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes  
Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen,  
My reason all the same; and they are ready  
To-morrow, or at further space, t' appear  
Where you shall hold your session. At this time  
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;  
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are curs'd  
By those that feel their sharpness.  
The question of Cordelia and her father  
Requires a fitter place.

Alb. Sir, by your patience,  
I hold you but a subject of this war,  
Not as a brother.

Reg. That's as we list to grace him.  
Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded  
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
Bore the commission of my place and person,  
The which immediacy may well stand up  
And call itself your brother.

Gon. Not so hot!  
In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
More than in your addition.

Reg. In my rights  
By me invested, he compeers the best.

Gon. That were the most if he should husband you.

Reg. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

Gon. Holla, holla!

That eye that told you so look'd but asquint.

Reg. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer  
From a full-flowing stomach. General,  
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;  
Dispose of them, of me; the walls are thine.  
Witness the world that I create thee here  
My lord and master.

Gon. Mean you to enjoy him?

Alb. The let-alone lies not in your good will.

Edm. Nor in thine, lord.

Alb. Half-blooded fellow, yes.

Reg. [to Edmund] Let the drum strike, and prove my  
title thine.

Alb. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee  
On capital treason; and, in thine attaint,  
This gilded serpent [points to Goneril]. For your  
claim, fair

sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife.

'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord,

And I, her husband, contradict your banes.

If you will marry, make your loves to me;

My lady is bespoke.

Gon. An interlude!

Alb. Thou art arm'd, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.  
If none appear to prove upon thy person  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There's my pledge [throws down a glove]! I'll prove  
it on thy

heart,

Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less

Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

Reg. Sick, O, sick!

Gon. [aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

Edm. There's my exchange [throws down a glove]. What in  
the world

he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.

Call by thy trumpet. He that dares approach,

On him, on you, who not? I will maintain

My truth and honour firmly.

Alb. A herald, ho!

Edm. A herald, ho, a herald!

Alb. Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,

All levied in my name, have in my name

Took their discharge.

Reg. My sickness grows upon me.

Alb. She is not well. Convey her to my tent.

[Exit

Regan, led.]

Enter a Herald.

Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound,



And read out this.

Capt. Sound, trumpet!  
sounds.

A trumpet

Her. (reads) 'If any man of quality or degree within  
the lists of

the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of  
Gloucester,

that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the  
third sound

of the trumpet. He is bold in his defence.'

Edm. Sound!  
trumpet.

First

Her. Again!  
trumpet.

Second

Her. Again!  
trumpet.

Third

Trumpet answers  
within.

Enter Edgar, armed, at the third sound, a Trumpet  
before him.

Alb. Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call o' th' trumpet.

Her. What are you?

Your name, your quality? and why you answer  
This present summons?

Edg. Know my name is lost;

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit.

Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope.

Alb. Which is that adversary?

Edg. What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of  
Gloucester?

Edm. Himself. What say'st thou to him?

Edg. Draw thy sword,

That, if my speech offend a noble heart,

Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.

Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,

My oath, and my profession. I protest-

Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence,

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,

Thy valour and thy heart-thou art a traitor;

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father;

Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince;

And from th' extremest upward of thy head  
To the descent and dust beneath thy foot,  
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou 'no,'  
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent  
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,  
Thou liest.

Edm. In wisdom I should ask thy name;  
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,  
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,  
What safe and nicely I might well delay  
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.  
Back do I toss those treasons to thy head;  
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;  
Which-for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise-  
This sword of mine shall give them instant way  
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak!  
Alarums. Fight. [Edmund

falls.]

Alb. Save him, save him!

Gon. This is mere practice, Gloucester.

By th' law of arms thou wast not bound to answer  
An unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquish'd,  
But cozen'd and beguil'd.

Alb. Shut your mouth, dame,

Or with this paper shall I stop it. [Shows her her  
letter to

Edmund.]-[To Edmund]. Hold, sir.

To Goneril] Thou worse than any name, read thine own  
evil.

No tearing, lady! I perceive you know it.

Gon. Say if I do-the laws are mine, not thine.

Who can arraign me fort?

Alb. Most monstrous!

Know'st thou this paper?

Gon. Ask me not what I

know.

Exit.

Alb. Go after her. She's desperate; govern her.

[Exit an  
Officer.]

Edm. What, you have charg'd me with, that have I done,  
And more, much more. The time will bring it out.

'Tis past, and so am I.-But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,  
I do forgive thee.

Edg. Let's exchange charity.

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;  
If more, the more th' hast wrong'd me.

My name is Edgar and thy father's son.  
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to scourge us.  
The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
Cost him his eyes.

Edm. Th' hast spoken right; 'tis true.

The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

Alb. Methought thy very gait did prophesy  
A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee.  
Let sorrow split my heart if ever I  
Did hate thee, or thy father!

Edg. Worthy prince, I know't.

Alb. Where have you hid yourself?

How have you known the miseries of your father?

Edg. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;  
And when 'tis told, O that my heart would burst!  
The bloody proclamation to escape  
That follow'd me so near (O, our lives' sweetness!  
That with the pain of death would hourly die  
Rather than die at once!) taught me to shift  
Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance  
That very dogs disdain'd; and in this habit  
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
Their precious stones new lost; became his guide,  
Led him, begg'd for him, sav'd him from despair;  
Never (O fault!) reveal'd myself unto him  
Until some half hour past, when I was arm'd,  
Not sure, though hoping of this good success,  
I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last  
Told him my pilgrimage. But his flaw'd heart  
(Alack, too weak the conflict to support!)  
'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
Burst smilingly.

Edm. This speech of yours hath mov'd me,  
And shall perchance do good; but speak you on;  
You look as you had something more to say.

Alb. If there be more, more woful, hold it in;  
For I am almost ready to dissolve,  
Hearing of this.

Edg. This would have seem'd a period  
'To such as love not sorrow; but another,  
To amplify too much, would make much more,  
And top extremity.  
Whilst I was big in clamour, came there a man,  
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding  
Who 'twas that so endur'd, with his strong arms

He fastened on my neck, and bellowed out  
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;  
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
That ever ear receiv'd; which in recounting  
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
Began to crack. Twice then the trumpets sounded,  
And there I left him tranc'd.

Alb. But who was this?

Edg. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise  
Followed his enemy king and did him service  
Improper for a slave.

Enter a Gentleman with a bloody knife.

Gent. Help, help! O, help!

Edg. What kind of help?

Alb. Speak, man.

Edg. What means that bloody knife?

Gent. 'Tis hot, it smokes.

It came even from the heart of-O! she's dead!

Alb. Who dead? Speak, man.

Gent. Your lady, sir, your lady! and her sister  
By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

Edm. I was contracted to them both. All three  
Now marry in an instant.

Enter Kent.

Edg. Here comes Kent.

Alb. Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead.

[Exit

Gentleman.]

This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble  
Touches us not with pity. O, is this he?  
The time will not allow the compliment  
That very manners urges.

Kent. I am come

'To bid my king and master aye good night.

Is he not here?

Alb. Great thing of us forgot!

Speak, Edmund, where's the King? and where's  
Cordelia?

The bodies of Goneril and Regan are  
brought in.

Seest thou this object, Kent?

Kent. Alack, why thus?

Edm. Yet Edmund was belov'd.

The one the other poisoned for my sake,  
And after slew herself.

Alb. Even so. Cover their faces.

Edm. I pant for life. Some good I mean to do,  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send  
(Be brief in't) to the castle; for my writ  
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.

Nay, send in time.

Alb. Run, run, O, run!

Edg. To who, my lord? Who has the office? Send  
Thy token of reprieve.

Edm. Well thought on. Take my sword;  
Give it the Captain.

Alb. Haste thee for thy life. [Exit

Edgar.]

Edm. He hath commission from thy wife and me  
To hang Cordelia in the prison and  
To lay the blame upon her own despair  
That she fordid herself.

Alb. The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

[Edmund is

borne off.]

Enter Lear, with Cordelia [dead] in his arms, [Edgar,  
Captain,

and others following].

Lear. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stone.  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for  
ever!

I know when one is dead, and when one lives.  
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking glass.  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
Why, then she lives.

Kent. Is this the promis'd end?

Edg. Or image of that horror?

Alb. Fall and cease!

Lear. This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
That ever I have felt.

Kent. O my good master!

Lear. Prithee away!

Edg. 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

Lear. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have sav'd her; now she's gone for ever!  
Cordelia, Cordelia I stay a little. Ha!

What is't thou say'st, Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low-an excellent thing in woman.

I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Capt. 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear. Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion  
I would have made them skip. I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?

Mine eyes are not o' th' best. I'll tell you  
straight.

Kent. If fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,  
One of them we behold.

Lear. This' a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

Kent. The same-

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.

He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

Kent. No, my good lord; I am the very man-

Lear. I'll see that straight.

Kent. That from your first of difference and decay  
Have followed your sad steps.

Lear. You're welcome hither.

Kent. Nor no man else! All's cheerless, dark, and  
deadly.

Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,  
And desperately are dead.

Lear. Ay, so I think.

Alb. He knows not what he says; and vain is it  
That we present us to him.

Edg. Very bootless.

Enter a Captain.

Capt. Edmund is dead, my lord.

Alb. That's but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.  
What comfort to this great decay may come  
Shall be applied. For us, we will resign,  
During the life of this old Majesty,  
To him our absolute power; [to Edgar and Kent] you  
to your

rights;

With boot, and Such addition as your honours  
Have more than merited.-All friends shall taste  
The wages of their virtue, and all foes  
The cup of their deservings.-O, see, see!

Lear. And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never!  
Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her! look! her lips!  
Look there, look there! He dies.

Edg. He faints! My lord, my lord!

Kent. Break, heart; I prithee break!

Edg. Look up, my lord.

Kent. Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.

Edg. He is gone indeed.

Kent. The wonder is, he hath endur'd so long.  
He but usurp'd his life.

Alb. Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is general woe. [To Kent and Edgar] Friends of my  
soul, you  
twain

Rule in this realm, and the gor'd state sustain.

Kent. I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.

My master calls me; I must not say no.

Alb. The weight of this sad time we must obey,  
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.  
The oldest have borne most; we that are young  
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

Exeunt with a dead

march.